

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

February 23, 2004 LR 14

SENATOR STUHR: Thank you, Mr. President and members of the body. With all the discussion on gambling, I'm still one of those that is not convinced that it is the right thing to do that we should be allowing casinos within our state. Earlier, Senator Brown spoke about discussing that we should only be discussing the merits of gambling...we shouldn't be, but we should be discussing who should be in control. I wanted to share with you a definition of gambling that I found: lust for sudden wealth that is not connected with the process of making society more productive. And I really feel that government support of gambling gives a legitimizing aspect to the pursuit of wealth without work. What it says is all...is that you don't have to work, just roll the dice. When government relies on gambling to finance a share of the public budget, I believe that there's a temptation to protect gambling. I believe at this time we live in a society that looks at immediate gratification. We look at the short term. We look at what might be fun. But we don't look at the long-term effects. Back in 1996, there were discussions on casinos and a constitutional amendment. At that time, 40 Nebraska economists signed a statement opposing the establishment of such gambling in the state. The additional direct and indirect costs from expanded gambling are likely to far outweigh the additional direct and indirect benefits for the state as a whole. Last weekend, I had an opportunity to travel to New Mexico to attend an education conference. We had some friends that have lived there all of their life. They do have casino gambling in New Mexico. My friend said, yes, I voted for it. If I had to do it all over again, I would not support it. She's seen all the negative effects that it has brought to their state. I think another concern is the penetration of gambling into the world of children and teenagers. Nationally, studies show that about two-thirds of teens have gambled in the past year. Sometimes they're betting on sports or cards with their friends. But a large percentage are gambling on legal activities, despite their ages. Unfortunately, the media, the state government, and gambling industry are sending messages to children that gambling is legitimate and a harmless recreation. Millions of kids also see their parents gambling, and they can't wait to get in on the fun. I believe the significant costs of gambling will always exceed the meager benefits. To allow the gambling industry to profit at taxpayers' expense is wrong.